

HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

The 2001 *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) requires states to report data to the public on the number of classes in the public schools that are taught by “highly qualified teachers (HQT).” This report summarizes data collected in April 2004 about the status of New Jersey’s teachers in meeting the federal highly qualified definition. All local districts and schools in the state were required to participate in the survey. The Department of Education trained district administrators in summer 2003 about New Jersey’s HQT policy and how to determine whether teachers of core academic subjects met the federal definition.

It is important to note that the NCLB definition of a “highly qualified teacher” is based solely on the attainment of specific credentials that will soon be required of all teachers by the federal government. It has little to do with the quality of a teacher’s performance in the classroom.

The data in this report are provided in accordance with the exact HQT credential requirements of NCLB—a bachelor’s degree, a standard certification for which no requirements have been waived, and documentation of content area expertise in each subject taught.

Depending on the grade level taught, there are variations in the statewide percentage of teachers who meet the HQT definition (as found in Table 1). At the elementary level where all classes are self-contained, 96.3 percent of the teachers meet the definition of HQT. At the middle and secondary levels where all classes are departmentalized (where students have different teachers for different subjects), 90.5 percent of the teachers meet the definition. In intermediate schools, with a mix of self-contained and departmentalized classes, 91.8 percent meet the definition.

Since more content-specific preparation is needed to teach at the higher grade levels, it is not surprising that the percentage of teachers meeting the federal definition is

not as high in departmentalized middle and secondary schools. In these settings, teachers are sometimes asked to take on teaching assignments in areas other than those in which they hold an undergraduate degree or the highly specific credentials required because of situations such as staffing shortages.

These data reflect teachers who are “highly qualified” for all of the subjects they teach. However, the survey results indicate that at least half of the teachers not reported as “highly qualified” for all subjects they teach were, in fact, “highly qualified” for at least one subject that they teach.

Also, it is important to note that until the adoption of new NCLB-required regulations by the State Board of Education in December 2003, the state’s licensing requirements at both the middle school level and for special education were not aligned to federal requirements.

Background

Under NCLB, elementary school teachers satisfy the content preparation requirement as generalists because they must demonstrate knowledge across the range of subjects taught in elementary schools. Since 1985, teachers have automatically met this requirement by passing the Praxis II Elementary Content Knowledge test required for state certification. Veteran teachers also have the option of satisfying the requirement by accruing ten points on the NJ HOUSE Standard Content Knowledge Matrix, through which teachers receive credit for college coursework, professional development activities related to their content area, and years of content area teaching experience.

Departmentalized middle- and secondary-level teachers must now show content area expertise in *each* core academic subject they teach in order to meet the NCLB definition. The options for meeting this requirement are as follows:

- Passing the required content-knowledge exam in the content. This is already a part of the licensing process for those with K-12 content area

certificates and is now a part of the process for the new elementary with specialization certificates for grades 5-8 ; or

- Having an undergraduate major in the content; or
- Having 30 credits equivalent to a major in the content; or
- Having a graduate degree in the content; or
- Having an advanced credential, such as National Board Certification, in the content.

Veteran middle and secondary teachers also have the option of accruing ten points on the NJ HOUSE Standard Content Knowledge Matrix for each core academic subject they teach.

Special education teachers who provide direct instruction in core academic content—either as replacement teachers in resource settings or in self-contained classes—must meet the requirements in the same manner as elementary, middle and high school teachers. It is the level of the content they teach, however, rather than the age or grade level of the students, that determines the basis on which they satisfy the requirement for content area expertise. Special education teachers whose sole role is to provide support or consultation to students with disabilities who are being instructed by HQT are currently exempt from meeting the HQT requirement.

Disaggregation by Poverty Level

The survey information was collected for all schools statewide and has been disaggregated by high-poverty and low-poverty schools. High poverty is defined as the 25 percent of the schools in the state with the largest percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch. Low poverty is defined as the 25 percent of schools in the state with the smallest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Data in Table 2 show that for all three grade level configurations, classes in low-poverty schools have the greatest percentage of HQT. At the elementary level, the

percentage of HQT in low-poverty schools is 98.6 percent, while it is 91 percent in high-poverty schools. At the middle and secondary levels, the percentage of HQT in low-poverty schools is 94.5, while it is 81.1 percent in high-poverty schools.

Classes in Elementary Schools

Table 3 provides more information about classes taught by HQT at the elementary level. Overall, 98.2 percent of teachers in self-contained classes meet the definition, compared with 95.3 percent in high-poverty schools and 98.5 percent in low-poverty schools. A somewhat smaller percentage of specialty area classes are taught by HQT. In world languages, 88.3 percent of all world language classes are taught by HQT, while 84 percent of classes in high-poverty schools are taught by HQT.

Classes in Departmentalized Middle Schools

In Table 4, data for departmentalized middle school classes show that, statewide, the percent of classes taught by HQT varies from 96.1 percent in the visual and performing arts to 81.9 percent in special education self-contained classes. The percentage of math and science classes taught by HQT is lower than the percentage of language arts and social studies taught by HQT. High-poverty schools show an appreciably lower percentage of classes taught by HQT, with 78 percent in science, 76.7 percent in math, 72.1 percent in world languages, and 64.9 percent in special education self-contained classes. It is important to note that the federal law imposed new requirements for middle school and special education teachers to have specific content expertise in all subjects taught.

Classes in Secondary Schools

Data in Table 5 report the classes taught by HQT at the secondary level. Statewide, the percentage of classes taught by HQT ranges from 97.8 percent in the visual and performing arts to 93.8 percent in math. The data show that 76.9 percent of

special education self-contained classes are taught by HQT. This reflects the federal expectation that all teachers who teach secondary level content be highly qualified in each area they teach. Special education teachers in a self-contained setting are responsible for teaching several secondary-level subjects. The difficulty of achieving expertise in many content areas is reflected in the data reported. The variations in the data between high-poverty and low-poverty schools is consistent with the variations found with the elementary and middle school levels in Tables 3 and 4.

It is important to note that the data collected did not separate the special education teachers providing replacement subject area instruction at the middle and high school levels, but instead included them in the specific subject area totals. Further data collection and analysis will be needed to determine the specific number of highly qualified special education teachers who are teaching resource center replacement subjects at the middle and high school levels.

The New Jersey Department of Education will continue to collect information from districts and schools about the status of their teachers meeting the HQT definition. Teachers who have not yet met the HQT definition have until the end of the 2005-06 school year to satisfy the requirements. They can achieve this by taking college courses, participating in professional development activities, or passing the appropriate content area PRAXIS test(s). The state will monitor the progress of district and school progress in decreasing the number of teachers who do not satisfy the federal definition.

The 2004 School Report Card will include information about the HQT requirement.

